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# HISTORY OF PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE IN ARGENTINA

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## Abstract

Professional guidance has developed in Argentina since 1940, influenced by the guidance which in that time came from Spain, France, Belgium and Switzerland. The paper analyzes the first experiences in professional guidance, developed both in the great industrial cities as Buenos Aires and Rosario, and little urban centres as Tucumán or San Luis. The institutional and political context of such experiences is also analyzed, as well as the State's full support of them.

**Key words:** History – Professional Guidance – Argentina

The beginnings of professional guidance in Argentina was related to two complementary processes. On one side, the advances in the field of psychology and psychotechnics related to the knowing of the abilities and characteristics of personality which made possible the reciprocal adecuating of men to work. On the other side, the economical and social conditions which had transformed the political scenario in the country, since the end of 1930. In fact, the relation between *professions* and *sciences* is complex and, in numerous occasions, social requests even demand for intervention tools which precede the scientific knowledge in which those interventions should be based (di Doménico & Villanova, 2000).

Related to social requests, as a consequence from WWII a slight industrial process was produced in the country, mainly lead to the substitution of imported goods (Kosacoff & Azpiazyu, 1989). In 1943, the newly created National Council of Postwar accelerated such process, which would find new good circumstances for its development since the five-year-plans of the peronist administration in 1947 and 1953, which looked to generate a greater production and overcome the distribution crisis (Halperin Donghi, 1983; Waldmann, 1981). Between 1930 and 1935 and 1945 and 1949 the Argentinean industrial

production doubled, with the credit increase, control on currency and tax protection (James, 1990).

Within such context, *professional guidance* reached institutional status after 1949's constitutional reform, when it got incorporated in article 37, which acknowledged the rights of workers, families, older people, education and culture.

*“Professional Guidance of the Young*, conceived as a complement of the action of instructing and educating, is a social responsibility that the State supports and encourages with institutions that guide the young towards the activities for which they possess natural abilities, with the goal of that the adequate professional choice redounds in a benefit for him and the society.” (Nación Argentina, 1950, p. 23).

The military government in 1945 had already established the National Commission of Learning and Professional Guidance (Pronko, 2003), in the frame of the technical education in different levels (Wiñar, 1970). In a similar direction, the peronist Second five-year-plan set the objective of “redirecting the learning and the professional guidance”, in the field of education and work. Relating to work, it was established that social and economical State politics had to be developed over certain topics, among them:

“Establishment of rational correlations between the worker's *ability* and his occupation, in order to get the highest indexes of productivity and retribution” (Nación Argentina, 1953, p. 83; the italic scripts are mine).

The objectives shown in this kind of considerations related to *colective professional guidance*, which was conceived from a public interest. At the same time, it created conditions for the development of an *individual professional guidance*, which would find better conditions for its consolidation from 1960 on.

But if that was the political and institutional frame, professional guidance was possible because of the advances produced in the field of applied psychology and psychotechnics. Specially, the new conceptions about the issue of production and capacity at school and work, as reorientations on the issue of abilities in education and work. Likewise, the advances related to technics or inventories of personality needed to establish the diagnose successfully, levelling and reorientation that those issues involved.

In such a context, then, *psychotechnics* and *professional guidance* began to show themselves as needed tools of knowledge and intervention. (Klappenbach, 1995b).

Applied psychology was not a new phenomenon in the middle of the 20th century. On the contrary, it had received an outstanding impulse after WWI, when the role of psychology as a profession had been emphasized and destined to the promotion of *human welfare* (Gentile, 1997).

In Argentina, the results of the interest for the application of psychology in the field of psychotechnics and professional guidance would start an important set of interventions, and even start the creation of new undergraduate programs: the Psychotechnician and Professional Guide undergraduate program, that the National University of Tucumán organized in 1950 under the direction of Benjamin Aybar (Klappenbach, 1995a; Rossi, 1997); the Specialization in Psychology organized in the National University of Cuyo in 1953, under the direction of Plácido Horas (Klappenbach, 1995a); and the undergraduate program of Psychotechnics Assistant, which was organized in the same year by the University of the Litoral, in Rosario, directed by Erminda Benítez de Lambruschini (Gentile, 2003).

In such a context, it will be interesting to describe the first practices in professional guidance in the country.

First of all, it is convenient to outline that in 1947, Editorial Kapelusz published the *Handbook of Professional Guidance* of Mira y López, the Spanish Psychiatrist emigrated to South America. The work made a real treaty of psychotechnics and professional guidance, in which Mira discussed at the same time both theoretical, technical and institutional issues. From the data which should be considered to issue the “guidance advice” to the general theory of tests, including the rules for the classification of works depending on the abilities they involved, the whole range of psychotechnics and professional guidance was faced by Mira y López (1947). In such, it was an update of professional guidance -and psychotechnics-, done by a specialist in the subject that had maintained a relationship of close familiarity to personalities like Lahy or Claparède, which had achieved an outstanding international acknowledgement (Carpintero, 1993), and which for few years lived in Argentina (Klappenbach, 1999).

Besides of its own value, a second remarkable issue in such book lies in the fact that it constituted the launching of the “Library of Educational Sciences”, which was started being published by Editorial Kapelusz, in which Alfredo Calcagno's was the editor. Regarding our subject, it of interest to outline that, in first place, Calcagno had studied

with Mercante and Senet in Argentina, and Decroly, Ioteyko and Raymond Buyse in Belgium. And in second place, that the library of Educational Sciences of Editorial Kapelusz, which began with Mira's *Handbook*, would start being edited in 1952, the seven volumes of the *Treatise of Applied Psychology* (Piéron, 1952-1961), barely three years after the beginning of the original edition, compiled by Henri Piéron in France (Piéron, 1949-1959).

In such a sense, if in the 20s the psychotechnics and professional guidance had been inserted in the field of work (Jesinghaus, 1924; Palacios, 1922/1944), in the middle of the century it had been moved towards the educational field mainly, even when it always kept a basic relation to the field of work, as it would be seen in the developments done specially in the University of Tucumán.

In fact, the Institute of Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance of the National University of Tucumán, lead by Benjamín Aybar, wanted to develop the “human factor” and the “study of the labourer's work”. The conception from which Aybar started was that the major production problems could be translated to psychological terms: “adequation of the tools to the labourer and of the labourer to the tools; abilities and qualities according more with the various works, adequate shops, motivation, incentives, etc.”

Aybar's philosophical work has gotten many studies (Caturelli, 1971; 1973; Darós, 1975; Farré & Lértora Mendoza, 1981; Rego, 1983; Risco Fernández, 1967), and in the last years his contributions to psychology have started being analyzed (Klappenbach, 2002; Piñeda, 2004). For example, the very original way in which he faced the issue of transcendence has been pointed, from a position that even though it was basically tomist, it was close to agustinian positions, as it mentioned a pre-intellectual access to such transcendence (Caturelli, 1973). That pre-intellectual instance, primordial truth of the person, was named by Aybar as *esseedad*; while the *Self* was conceived as an afterwards construction, issue which hadn't been appreciated by the modern thought, in his opinion. His position, at the same time, took distance from the existentialist statements, given the fact that he didn't consider the human being to be thrown into the world, but, on the contrary, it was *harmoniously* put.

In any case, his philosophical, ontological and anthropologic positions were closely related with his interest for psychotechnics and professional guidance. In fact, Aybar stated that education had to start from that *esseedad*, that preintelectual tendency, and that the “*diversity of abilities*” had to be respected (Aybar, 1954, p. 26). Even though Aybar meant the educative process, it is clear that, at the same time, he was referring to

the goal of the process of professional guidance: to find the best job for personal fulfilment.

In such a way, in Tucumán, professional guidance was held in a double record. One of them was economical, centred in the rationale of the science of work. The other was antropologic-philosophic, based in the search of personal fulfilment. In fact, the potential development of abilities could match, in a psychophysical level, the development of the own *esseedad's* freedom.

In any case, Aybar's position in the context of Argentina's psychotechnics and professional guidance had impressive precedents. In the 20s, Alfredo Palacios, known as the first Socialist Deputy in America, had faced the study of *fatigue* from a double matrix: in the scientific, from psicophysiology of the early 20th century, for which he would organize an experimental psychology lab; in the ideologic, from the socialist ideals, aimed towards the reduction of working hours and the improvement of the labourer's working conditions (Palacios, 1925; 1922/1944). In that way, Palacios, as Aybar would later, strongly criticized the *Taylorist* professional guidance.

In any case, Aybar and Palacios were in a tradition that emphasized from different perspectives the application of psychology, psychotechnics and professional guidance to the field of work, where Carlos Jesinghaus and Gregorio Fingerman also outstood.

Relating to Jesinghaus, it must be pointed that in a Work Congress in Rosario in 1923 he gave the idea of creating a Central Institute of Professional Guidance. The objective of this Institute would be to examine all the young who were close to finish school, establishing a diagnose based on corporal adequacy, vocation, economic situation both of the young and his family, and the situation of the jobs positions (Jesinghaus, 1924).

The institute would be installed in 1925, and between 1928 and 1930 it maintained a school dedicated to educate professional guidance counsellors. To applicate to the School some of the following requisites were needed: college graduates in undergraduate programs of no less than 4 years long, graduates from the National Institute of High Professorship which had three years of working in their profession; high school professors with five years experience; elementary school teachers with seven years experience (Foradori, 1935). The interest for that undergraduate program would be proved with the number of students, 144 in 1928, from which 56 graduated. The *syllabus*, structured in five subjects, shows the existence of three basic disciplines of professional guidance: fisiology, psychology and economy.

In fact, in the first year, three classes were given: Physiological-medical grounds of professional guidance; Psychological basis of professional guidance; Economical grounds of professional guidance. And in second year, only two, more practically-oriented. Organization and practice of professional guidance and Chosen Problems of Psychotechnics. In 1931, the budget for its working was not given, and the Institute was incorporated to the Argentinian Social Museum (Foradori, 1935), and since then it would have an erratic functioning.

In any case, Carlos Jesinghaus privileged the economic point of view of the work science. A clear testimony of that conception can be traced in the analogy he stated between the psychotechnician and the security engineer. In fact, Jesinghaus distinguished two causes in work accidents: the objective ones, related to worn out or flawed materials, and the subjective or personal ones, related to worker failures. And if to prevent the first ones the security engineer had to intervene, the “security psychotechnician” had to intervene to prevent the second ones (Jesinghaus, 1935). In his perspective the security psychotechnician had to intervene not so much to preserve the working conditions as to prevent accidents, since it turned out to be more effective to operate on the workers than on the materials themselves.

Going back to Aybar, it is quite outstanding that in 1954 the Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance Institute of the National University of Tucumán had begun the organization of the First Psychotechnical Week of the Argentinean North, programmed for the next year. In one of the memorandums related to such preparations, a long rant on the work subject was made. It was pointed that in the last times there had been insistence regarding “the human being's hierarchy, turning him into the vital centre of economical activity and the reference point from which all other elements which configure an industry oscillate.” (Anonymous, 1954). In that direction, even when the subject of the adapting of human being to the working tools was not given up, the centre and tone of the issue had changed.

Therefore:

“until the beginning of Industrial Revolution and after its implantation, the human factor was taken into account in a second place. It only was taken into account from the moment when greater production problems were issued to industry, to be translated to psychological terms, qualities according more with the various works, adequate shops, motivation, incentives, etc.”

“It brought along the global and practical facing of the problem as a consequence, and the close collaboration between technics and applied psychology; on one side, the adecuation of men to this machinery, the psychotechnical formation of personnel capable of handling it, selection and guidance within the factory itself on different sections, according to the labourers' characteristics and particular dispositions.”

“As it is guessed from our statement, this *holistic* focus' consideration is the dominating tendence in the main economical foreign centres. Therefore, if we consider the North Argentinean Industry, we shall observe that the timing is extremely correct, first, to avoid the mistake of the old industry which focused only on the material aspects of the factory's processes; and second, to take the contributions of psychotechnics to every part of them, as technology advances.” (Anónimo, 1954, p. 570).

Regarding the issues discussed along the meeting, all different aspects contemplated in the work science were seen. In fact, those included four big subjects: professional formation, industrial relationships, health and hygiene; security, industrial law; chances of a new classification for works; free subjects related to the happiness of the production's human factor.

On the other side, other two issues related to professional guidance in Tucumán deserve being outlined. The first one is that while Palacios or Jesinghaus had used the instruments developed by the early 20th century psychophysiology, Aybar could resort to the wide group of technics and *tests* (or *personality reactivas*, as they were also named in those years) which the psychotechnics had developed in almost half a century. The second one is that the Bachelor in Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance would be organized in the National University of Tucumán in 1950. The undergraduate program would work until 1958 and no less than 20 bachelors in psychotechnics and professional guidance graduated. The *syllabus* was not organized according to the years, but for subject groups. The group of “psychological” subjects was conformed by experimental psychology, evolutive psychology, social psychology and psychotechnics and professional guidance. A second group of subjects were taken at Law School: Political Economics, Sociographics, Work Laws and Social Psychology. A third group of subjects were taken in Biochemistry: Anatomy and Phisiology; Mental and Factory Hygiene (Rossi, 1997).



The changing of this subject into the undergraduate program of Psychology came after the First Argentinean Psychology Congress, in 1954, precisely in Tucumán. The creation of psychology or psychologist undergraduate programs was recommended in national universities, particularly for Tucumán's case, "the creation of a psychologist's undergraduate program in the School of Philosophy of the National University of Tucumán, on the basis of studies taken along the undergraduate program in psychotechnics, taking into account the lines drawn of the psychologist's undergraduate programme approved beforehand" (First Argentinean Psychology Congress, p. 508-509).

Anyway, after the coup d'etat of 1955, Benjamín Aybar, whom also taught Psychology of Religion at the University, has been fired. It is possible that such circumstance was due to the close identification that had been done between the objectives of psychotechnics and professional guidance and the more decidedly political projects of the peronist administration (Jorge Bianchi, 1999, personal communication).

After all, something alike had happened in the National University of Rosario. In 1953 the undergraduate program of Psychotechnics Assistant would be organized there, which over 200 students attended. However, the mentioned advices of the First Argentinian Psychology Congress implied the creation of the Psychologist undergraduate program in the end of 1954, which showed the emphasis in professional role over scientific discipline. Less than a year later, the removal of akin sectors to peronism from the University delayed the implementation of the new undergraduate program until 1956, when new intellectual figures would take the previous plan almost untouched and organize the first undergraduate program of Psychologist in a National University. The undergraduate program of Psychotechnic Assistant would start to fade after the Psychology undergraduate program was created, and the students of the first one had the chance of continuing their studies in the brand new institution. Those who finally got to graduate never got their diploma, according to the level of studies taken, but they would barely get a certificate, document with which the University showed the secondary role where that undergraduate program was being placed (Ovide Menin, 1999, personal communication).

The National University of Cuyo organized in San Luis in 1952 the "Direction of Educational Psychology and Professional Guidance", which depended both of the University and the Province Government, and was lead by Plácido Alberto Horas, whom had newly graduated in Philosophy and arrived the Province in 1944. Among the goals of such lead was the "guidance in the teaching of under gifted children"; "diagnose and

psychopedagogic assistance of pupils depending on the Minor's Direction"; "exams and advices of guidance and professional training both in study of abilities as in what refers to adjusting personality to work"; "examine psychotechnically those who want scholarships given by the Province"; "to form the technical personnel specialized in the mentioned works" (National University of Cuyo - Province of San Luis. Direction of educational Psychology and professional guidance, 1952).

Plácido Horas thought of professional guidance as a meeting point between the personal wishes and individual conditions -*personality and ability*-, on one side, and the social needs, on the other. In fact, professional guidance "wants the works and professions to be chosen accordingly to the own personality, the abilities and the social environment" (Horas, 1951a). In such sense, Horas stated that the professional choice depended directly of the kind of social structure and the technology of a society, and in such way he outlined the lack of an economical-social technical structure in the city of San Luis, and, in that sense, "if we compare with a similar city of the United States, the numeric and cualitative differences in professional preferences will be seen" (Horas, 1951a, p. 132).

At the same time, Horas grounds his approach towards professional guidance in Spranger's work, and, in a smaller scale, Charlotte Bühler and Landis'. In fact, in *The Psychology of the youthful age*, Spranger had stated explicitly that in the vocational coice of the teenager, not only economical factors intervened, but also morals, since such such choice constituted a cosmos vision for the young person, a conception that Horas would repeat. All the same, Horas, emphasized the need of penetrating the child fantasies on professions, the "professional dreams", such as Spranger mentioned them (Horas, 1951a).

To summarize, within Placido Horas' ideas, the Professional Guidance was a central issue that had already been pointed early. In fact, one of the goals of the Institute of Pedagogical Researches, organized by Horas himself in the Faculty of Education Sciences in the University of Cuyo, was precisely "to considerate the issues of *professional guidance* through its different aspects and according to the needs of the enviroment of Cuyo" (National University of Cuyo. Faculty of Education Sciences, 1948, p. 23). In order to make such goals, the Institute of Researches had already started experimental professional guiding with the senior students of the High School Professorship "Juan Pascual Pringles", maintained by the University, through various instruments such as surveys, reports, tests, etc. (Horas, 1951b).

So, it is possible to point out at least one characteristic of professional guidance in Cuyo that it was different from Tucumán's one; actually, San Luis's professional guidance seemed less related to the work environment and more headed towards education, even when such fields could have been deeply related. On the other hand, another characteristic approaches Horas' experience in San Luis with Aybar's in Tucumán. The described activities of professional guidance plus all those foreseen by the Educational Psychology and Professional Guidance Direction issued the fact of formation of technical specialized personnel. For it, Plácido horas himself promoted the creation of a "Specialization in Psychology", for which he took into account, among other elements, the previous experiences of similar undergraduate programs in Spain, France and USA; the development of Psychology in our country and "the relations between the formation in Psychology and the goals of the 2º five-year-plan" (Anonymous, 1952/1953, p. 284-5).

And assuring that the link between the professional development of psychology and the five-year-plan was far from being a personal position of the specialization's promotor, one of the creators of such undergraduate program took into account such aspects, and pointed with no error:

"That diverse goals of the II Five-year-plan, in a precise or indirect way and in many of its points, holds legally the Organization of specialists in Psychology to operate in numerous fields" (Anonymous, p. 285).

The specialization in Psychology of the University of San Luis structured on the basis of three years of study, which had 11 subjects: In the first year, four were to be taken: Anatomy and Phisiology, Psychology I, Psychology II, Psychology of the Child and the Teenager. In the second year, four more: Notions in Psychopathology, For Psychology, Social Psychology, Notions in Mathematics applied to Psychology. In third year, all three remaining subjects and the final paper: Applied Psychology I (General Issues, notions in psychometrics, critical study of student tests, student's records), Applied Psychology II (school and professional guidance, professional selection, general psychotechnics with notions of its application to industry). Applied Psychology III (notions of biotypology and anthropometry, differential psychology and characterology. Study Methods). Those to whom the specialization was destined were mainly those graduates in pedagogy, philosophy or akin disciplines.

The implementation of the undergraduate program of psychology after the First Argentinean Congress of Psychology outshined the specialization in psychology Horas had imagined. Still, the similarities between both curricular designs are notorious, as is the Bachelor in Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance in the National University of Tucumán.

To finish, we must underline the fact that the middle century professional guidance developed in Argentina was of the *collective* professional guidance. Whilst the *individual* professional guidance wanted “to achieve that every subject worked in the best job fit” (Mira y López, 1948, p. 8), with “a minimum effort and maximum results” (Mira y López, 1948, p. 2), the *collective*, on the other side, looked for “the working population of a country distributed conveniently among the diverse frames, according to the convenience or requirement of the current economic-social plan to obtain national progress” (Mira y López, 1948, p. 8). In such sense, while it could be said that collective professional guidance compromised directly public politics, in the field of education, work, social-economic overall development and the formation of resources and demographic politics in particular. In the same way, while individual professional guidance was a request that came, at a same time, from the State, from the institutions of civil society (mainly enterprises) and the individual itself, collective professional guidance only could be constituted in the frame of the State's decisions, and in such sense only in countries with a centralized, or at least planned economy.

It is not possible to know, if individual professional guidance involve the intervention of a *liberal professional*, even when could come from the State or the civil society, is something hard to establish in the period we are analyzing. On the other hand, the really small amount of graduates in psychotechnics and professional guidance in the University of Tucumán -around twenty- and professional guides graduated from the Institute of Psychotechnics and professional guidance created in the late twenties in Buenos Aires, did not encourage the constitution of a stable professional. To such situation we must add the influx of the organization of the undergraduate programs in psychology from the middle fifties on, which would create the constitution of a new professional figure, the *psychologist*, which in some cases, as in Rosario and Tucumán, got installed in a close harmony with the previous undergraduate programs in the environment of college teaching. In any case, the most developed professional guidance mode would basically be the collective one, starting from the strongly leading role of the State, at least until the late fifties.

Nonetheless, it would be better not to exaggerate the differences between both forms of professional guidance since, after all, the focus in ability and results, applied to the environment of work would bring both of them very close. To close, there was a consensus in those days in which both forms of professional guidance needed a harmonic development and that differences would be seen in technics and the kind of institution which would carry on the process.

In no way there is, then, any incompatibility between both modes, but there is, however, a difference in techniques and means to carry them on, for as individual professional guidance can be done in any laboratory or particular or private institute, collective professional guidance only can be carried on by an official centre, which has all the statistics required for carrying it on, and besides, checks them daily and resets them, according to how events unfold” (Mira y López, p. 9).

In any case, it is of interest to state that in the middle of the century there would be a development in Argentina of a whole group of theories, technics and practical interventions in the field of professional guidance, which would be channelled by a State with planning intentions. And in such sense, when the sixties came and the State began to lose its hegemony, so would lose it such manner of professional guidance, which would begin to be replaced by a *clinic* point of view, centred mainly in the requests of the individual.